

November 2002

Attendees and Area Announcements listed after minutes.

General Environmental Health Topics

Annual DEHS Report

Tom Crow will be collecting information for our annual DEHS report. The intent is to come up with a document that Headquarters can use for the budget process, effect statements, "Q's and A's", and budget justification documents. It will also be something that the Areas can use to publicize the program, and use as a marketing tool. Tom hopes to have a cover page with a picture or program logo, so if you have something, let him know. Tom's email address is tcrow23701@aol.com. He hopes to have a forward from Bruce Chelikowsky as the Acting OEHE Director, and Kelly as the DEHS Director, a brief summary of the strategic plan, and the historical funding levels over the last 10 years. The main text will highlight what we've been doing over the past year under the ten essential public health services. Tom will send everyone a questionnaire to fill out about your program's activities. For example, what have you done to monitor environmental health status to identify community health problems? This relates to the first essential public health service as well as strategic initiative three, goals one and two. The document will have the essential public health function identified, but it will also link to the strategic plan goals, so you'll see how the strategic plan fits into this whole initiative. Under "monitoring health status", Tom expects that will cover WebEHRS and how you're using it to track your program. He would like to get into WebCident a little bit, but since it's early in the implementation phase, he's not too sure how to address it. Maybe something about what you're doing to implement it in your Area as a health status monitoring tool. Tom went over the other essential services and gave examples of the questions he was hoping to get answered. Tom will email the questionnaire to everyone so they can comment on it and then he'll send the final questionnaire out to you. He hopes to have this completed by early January.

Institutional Environmental Health Training Program Evaluation

Tom will be going into greater detail about this on the upcoming Institutional Environmental Health conference call, but wanted to give a heads-up to the Chiefs about what he's doing with this. What this is NOT going to be is an Institutional Environmental Health Program management evaluation, but it may address some issues like "vision" and "mission" of the total program. It also is NOT an evaluation of the Institutional Residency Program, but will look at how that fits into the total training program. This will be similar to the evaluation of the Injury Prevention Training Program done by the University of North Carolina. It will look at the total IEH training program and how it all fits together. Tom will follow a six-step process. The first step is to figure out where the program wants to go. What is the vision and mission of the IEH program? From there, everything else will fall together. The next step is to figure out what core competencies and skills are required of the people in the field, district, Area,

and Headquarters level. Then he'll look at how effective the current program is in getting us there. Next he'll look at how existing offerings could be restructured to make them more efficient, then after looking at the current offerings, he'll look at potential additional offerings or credentialing programs that will get us where we want to be. Finally, he will process all the data into a final report. Tom has already met with Merritt and Kelly in Headquarters, and will talk with Jeff Morris at the Environmental Health Support Center soon. Tom has an interview worksheet that he is using to discuss the issues he mentioned previously. Once he's done with the Headquarters folks, he'll move on to the Area and District IEH Officers, and those people assigned to medical centers. After that, he'll talk with field level individuals, Service Unit Sanitarians, Safety Officers, CEOs, and Clinical Directors. Tom is familiar with some of the IEH courses, but there are others he isn't as familiar with, so he is scheduled to attend five of those newer courses. While he's attending those courses, he'll be conducting face-to-face interviews with some of the students. He hopes to be completed with the evaluation by September 30, 2003. He's planning to present his findings at both the Annual DEHS Director's and IEH Meetings. Hopefully, he'll be able to report his progress on upcoming conference calls as well.

WebEHRS

Several Areas have already identified a coordinator for WebEHRS in their Area. Darren would like to encourage other Areas to do the same. He's been able to discuss projects, and address several issues that have come up from local meetings, and finds this very helpful. It would also be nice if those people who are identified as coordinators could attend the upcoming WebEHRS training in January. As a reminder, this will be two sessions, each one and a half days long, with 25 people per class. There will also be training materials produced during these classes that can be downloaded from the WebEHRS site so those people who can't make it to the classes, will still have a guide. The move of WebEHRS to outside the IHS firewall is still in progress. They're testing the security now.

There is a project going on in the Oklahoma Area that involves Chris Buchanan (Lawton Service Unit) and Farrell Smith (Chickasaw Nation). They're putting the 2001 FDA Food Code into WebEHRS. For those using E-surveys for Head Starts, the FDA Food Code will soon be available for your use. Many people have expressed an interest in using this. It will hopefully be ready for use within the next month. Darren is also looking at some FDA forms for collecting data, and will probably be asking some of you to review them for him. We hope to begin collecting food information nationally so we can start looking at trends.

2003 Promotion Process

First, I (Kelly) wanted to clarify something I sent out earlier. Apparently, I confused some of you when I sent you the promotion eligible officers' OIS. I sent out a disclaimer that said if you find errors in the OIS, do NOT contact DCP about them. There is a difference between the OIS and the PIR. If an officer who is up for promotion finds an

error in their PIR, they should contact DCP to correct it. DCP doesn't use the OIS for promotion purposes, so does not really care if they are incorrect. They are more concerned with the PIR and the OPF being correct.

During the last Branch Chief meeting in Oklahoma City, there was a bunch of discussion about how the IHS Category Promotion Board changed officers' score sheets without notifying the Branch Chiefs first. I want to try to avoid that this year. We've spent a great deal of time going over clarifications and interpretations so once the score sheets leave the Areas, there won't be the need for as many changes as last year. Branch Chiefs need to get all the correct documentation and be very clear on how the officers have scored themselves. If there are any questions, give me a call. The completed score sheets and all required documentation should come to me by November 22, and if I see something that is questionable, I'll contact you and we can clear it up before it goes to the Board. The Board will then rank the officers, I'll put them in the final cohorts, and then send the list to DCP by December 20. I'm trying to pull together a Board of O-6's who aren't up for permanent promotion right now. We don't have that many O-6's to choose from, and those we do have, all seem to be up for permanent promotion this cycle.

This is the last chance to discuss any questions you have on interpretation. I believe I've addressed everyone's concerns that were brought to my attention. One concern that came to me after the final version was published, was on Factor 3, Management Contributions. We had added some wording about officers in multiple acting positions and how they should be scored. I had said that you should pick one of the positions and use that to score your position. Presumably, you would pick the one that gave you the most points. However, we didn't have a time frame associated with those acting positions. The intent was to address the more permanent type of acting position; not to give you points if you were named acting while the boss was on vacation. This was to address those positions that weren't scheduled to be filled at anytime in the near future. If the officer is the Acting Area Injury Prevention Specialist and the District Sanitarian, and no one plans to advertise the Injury Prevention job, then you could legitimately claim the points for the Area Injury Prevention Specialist. As far as how long you needed to be acting, I would offer up the same amount of time associated with the supervisory factor, which is six months. There was no further comment about the length of time or what constituted an acting position, so we'll go with being in a somewhat permanent acting position within the last six months of the promotion cycle.

There was one question about the Area Evaluation score for an employee who works in another program other than Environmental Health. It was decided that the officer's supervisor should make that evaluation.

Another question had been raised about who makes the Area Evaluation and reviews the officer's score sheet if it's the Branch Chief that is up for promotion. The answer was it should be the OEHE Director. This score sheet, with the exception of the final Area Evaluation, was our attempt at making the process objective. There should be no

problem with the Branch Chief reviewing the other officers' score sheets and having the OEHE Director make the Area Evaluations.

A final question was about the officers needing to send in their current CV's. This is what we had done in the past, and I didn't change it this year, so yes, officers need to send in a current CV with their score sheets.

As a reminder, this score sheet process is only to be used for officers up for temporary promotion. The 6th precept is not used for those up for permanent promotion.

Vacancy Table

Please be sure to keep the Vacancy Table on the DEHS website current. The table is located at www.dehs.ihs.gov.

Participants and Area Announcements

Participants were asked to verify the number and type of COSTEPs they were requesting for this summer.

Aberdeen: Dave Compton. 2 General Duty, 2 Injury Prevention, 1 Occupational Health. Dave commented that on the OEHE Director's conference call, they were told they could just get on the database and start recruiting COSTEPs, but if they don't know how many COSTEPs HQ will support, how will that work? Kelly said that's why she wanted to get a number from everyone. She will let each Area know how many from each Area HQ should be able to support. Dave announced that the Environmental Health Services team received the IHS Director's Award for the second year in a row. The award was for their work on an emergency situation concerning mold in Fort Berthold. A lot of work was done in a short period of time to conduct sampling, get remediation started, remove employees from contaminated work areas, conduct health education, and to get new office space.

Albuquerque: Not on call. Fan called later and confirmed 3 General Duty COSTEPs.

Anchorage: Tom Coolidge & Jeff Smith. 5 General Duty, 2 Injury Prevention COSTEPs. Jeff announced Mark Stevens, who was a COSTEP in Bethel, reported for full time duty last week. The Construction Safety Officer just resigned so there's now a vacancy for that position. They're expecting to do about \$55,000,000 to \$60,000,000 worth of Sanitation Facilities Clinic Construction this next year. Let Jeff know if anybody is interested in a Construction Safety position. There was an earthquake last week. There was no significant impact in Anchorage but out of the Fairbanks office, they're busy doing community assessments. There was runway damage, potentially contaminated individual wells, and some houses fell off their foundations. Fairbanks is coordinating with the state emergency response and FEMA.

Bemidji: Diana Kuklinski. 2 General Duty COSTEPs.

Billings: John Sery. 1 General Duty COSTEP. Billings is finally able to fill the position at Crow that Mike Warren left. It's for a Safety and Occupational Health Specialist and opened on November 4th, and will close on November 25th. John Holland's last day here will be November 22, before he goes to ATSDR. His job will be advertised hopefully by the end of the year, as a 690 Industrial Hygienist series. John hopes to get someone with Residency training.

California: Paul Young. 2 General Duty COSTEPs. The Area is scrutinizing out of Area travel in order to cut their travel by 15%. Kelly said each Area is implementing travel cuts differently. One of the reasons there is an emphasis in cutting travel is because it's one of the IHS Interim Director's Management Initiatives to cut administrative and executive travel. There seem to be different interpretations in each Area as to what constitutes administrative and executive travel. Paul says the Area is looking at EHSC's training courses and Annual Division meetings to cut. The Deputy Area Director is who is making the decisions about travel cuts. Headquarters is also struggling with this. Because we don't have a 2003 budget yet, we don't really have a number to shoot for. Kelly submitted a travel budget that was somewhere between 5 - 10% less than last year's, then everyone's budget was cut \$5,000 on top of that. It could still go up or down from there until we get a 2003 budget though.

Nashville: Craig Shepherd. 1 General Duty, maybe 2 COSTEPs. He'll let me know later.

Navajo: Ken Secord. 3 General Duty, 1 Injury Prevention COSTEP. Still have a vacancy in Crownpoint. The position closed, but they got no applicants. If you have good people that want a job, please let Ken know.

Oklahoma: Kevin Meeks. 5 General Duty COSTEPs.

Phoenix: No COSTEPs this year. Area Workshop is December 3 - 5, 2002. Mike has been involved in the COA Conference Planning for June in Phoenix. Mike encourages everybody to attend. It will be one week after NEHA which will be held in Reno next year. Phoenix completed their Emergency Department Security Assessment so if anyone is interested in seeing that information, let Mike know.

Portland: Al Knapp. No COSTEPs this year. Portland has to cut their travel even if they're traveling under IHS travel orders that would be reimbursed with others' money (like EPA). They haven't said that if they travel out to the tribes, that that would be direct service and off the table.

Tucson: Mark Pike. 1 General Duty, 1 Injury Prevention COSTEP. Tohono O'odham formally requested to 638 the entire program. Will know by January how that will turn out.

Environmental Health Support Center: Not on call

Rockville: Kelly Taylor, Darren Buchanan, Tom Crow. Tom mentioned that he would send the Branch Chiefs copies of the IEH Training Evaluation questionnaire in light of the fiscal realities and contingencies these days. You may have some input into some of the questions about limitations to the training program.

Next Call

There is a conflict with the December conference call, so the next call will be January 2, 2003, 12:00 PM Eastern Time, conference call numbers are the same for each call:

Dial in Number: **1-888-323-7711** (for all calls)

*Pass Code: **90841** (for all calls)